DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 302 851 CS 211 629

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TITLE An Evaluation of the Trends of Realism in Caldecott Winner and First Honor Books 1966-1986.
PUB DATE 11 Nov 88
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (17th, Louisville, KY, November 9-11, 1988).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Books; *Childrens Literature; *Illustrations; Impressionism; *Picture Books; *Realism; Visual Arts
IDENTIFIERS Abstract Art; *Caldecott Award

ABSTRACT

To determine if there were any consistent tendencies toward the abstract or toward impressionism in the illustration of children's books between the years 1966 and 1986, a study examined the illustrations of Caldecott winners and Honor books. The study replicated John Stewig's study (using his evaluation instrument) of the same topic which covered the years 1938 through 1966. Stewig found no appreciable trends toward or away from realism in the illustrations of the Caldecott recipients from 1938-1966. In contrast, results of this study indicated a trend from 1966 to 1976 toward the abstract, and from 1977 to 1986 a definite trend toward realism. (Two figures and 4 tables of data are included; 18 references are attached.) (SR)

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AN EVALUATION OF THE TRENDS OF REALISM IN CALDECOTT WINNER AND FIRST HONOR BOOKS 1966-1986

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PROPOSAL ID# 304-05 PRESENTED
NOVEMBER 11, 1988
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
MID-SOUTH EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

CS 211629

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INTRODUCTION

Children, by the time they are four years of age, have developed fifty percent of their general intelligence. By the time they are eight, they have developed another thirty percent. In addition, by the age of six, they will have developed a third of their vocabulary and speech skills (Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1986). These statements suggest that one third of the speech and vocabulary skills are developed during the pre-school years. It is important to note that picture books and other literary material should be skillfully prepared and presented to children, especially pre-school children. The importance of picture books may be further expressed by noting that two to four year old children (in Piaget's pre-conceptual phase) may utilize the picture books in order to develop conceptual skills, discover the scope of their environment and influence their play activity (Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1986).

Children should be provided with a continuous supply and variety of picture books; for enjoyment, escape or diversion, to stimulate the imagination, to

understand themselves and others and to understand the nature of language (Stewig, 1980). Without doubt, enjoyment is the most outstanding reason that children "read" picture books. For it is the pure enjoyment and pleasure of experiencing the development of the plot that leads to the satisfaction of discovering the ending. Escape, diversion and fantasy are an integral part of a child's intellectual development. They must read in order to better understand themselves and others. This understanding will only be attained when the child has access to an adequate literary background.

The Aesop's Fables preceded the Orbis Pictus by nearly two centuries. Originally intended for adults, they were destined to become popular with children. The fables were followed by the Hornbooks and Chapbooks. They were illustrated by woodcuts and were very much enjoyed by the children.

The Orbis Pictus, by Comenius, is usually considered to be the first picture book intended for children. It was written in Latin in 1657 by a Moravian Bishop and was translated into several languages during the following years. The

illustrations were reserved and formal; nonetheless, it was a beginning of picture books for children.

In the late 1800's three artists, in particular, began to produce books for children. They were Randolph Caldecott, Walter Crane and Kate Greenway (Jones, 1965). These artists enjoyed overnight success. Their popularity, originating in England, quickly spread to the United States. For the first time, illustrations were beginning to be considered as equally important as the text itself. These illustrators had demonstrated the need for humor, realism, color and the relationship of illustrations to a text.

This interest in illustrations led to numerous studies. One study revealed that a picture that is large and depicts an easily interpreted center of interest is appealing to children (Whipple, 1953). In addition, illustrations which depict action and tell part of the story are more appropriate and appealing. Rudisill (1952) conducted a study on color preference and found that children preferred a realistically colored picture as compared to black and white. The satisfaction received in viewing color is in proportion

to the degree of realism represented in the illustration. The theory of preference for realism is supported by a study which found similar results (Mellinger, 1932).

Children's preference for realism in pictorial content, familiarity in subject matter, minute details and imaginative figures, were conclusions reached in an earlier study (Martin, 1931). One definition of a good illustration is that it should have realistic color, suggest action, and be humorous. In addition, it should be beautiful in design and line. Most important of all, it must have feeling. Petersham (1925) noted that a good illustration survives the test of time and does not become outdated or obsolete because of over exposure or constant use.

Over the last decade, less than a dozen independent book stores actively retailed picture books. Today, there are over three hundred independent book stores that offer quality picture books for sale (Huck, Hyster & Hickman, 1987). Unfortunately, the market is flooded with the less expensive and mass produced copies. These editions are produced by chain publishers who are probably more

interested in volume sales than the educational contributions of the books.

The indication of a noticeable trend in the style of illustrations in children's picture books was noted (Kimmel, 1982). He expressed the fear that illustrations were losing their appeal to children and that the trend was toward impressing adult critics (Norton, 1987).

In 1968 a study of trends in Caldecott winners was completed by John W. Stewig. His study attempted to answer two questions which concerned the illustrations in children's books. One, is there a trend toward or away from realism in children's book illustrations? Two, do illustrators follow a trend in media? Stewig found that a tendency toward a low-reality style had developed in recent years. However, with the exception of one year (1961) there were no consistent tendencies toward abstract or impressionistic work.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to determine if there are any consistent tendencies toward the abstract or impressionism in the illustrations created by the

Caldecott winners and Honor Books for the years 1966 through 1986.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The illustrations in children's picture books fulfill several important purposes or functions. They may supplement a scene in a story or they may furnish information that is not directly related to the story. A mood may be established or an appropriate setting is developed. In addition, they may be used to establish a story's location in time and place and emphasize symbolic meaning (Norton, 1987).

Illustrations can provide for the introduction of object and symbolic recognition which prepares the child for reading readiness and future language development (Gambrell and Sokolski, 1983). In addition, books presented to a three or five year old child will have a lasting influence upon his attitudes toward books and reading (Amsden, 1960) (Cappa, 1957). Literature and illustrations can help to satisfy a childs need for stability in his environment and life (Brownrigg, 1980).

Another indication for the need for realism is that topics such as divorce, death and handicaps, once considered taboo, should be presented to enable the child to adapt to these situations. Fortunately, these topics have made some introduction into picture books (Chapman, 1980).

Positive attitudes and concepts about reading and writing can be developed when the children read and become involved with the characters, the plot and themselves (D'Angelo, 1981). Children's literature can then open the doors of communication between adults and children (Salomone, 1985).

It has been noted that research in children's literature has been directed toward color and media, rather than its application to learning a language and to read and write. Most studies have inferred that realism in illustrations is a necessity. However, there has been little research conducted to determine to what extent realism exist in the illustrations of children's books, specifically those which are representative of the Caldecott Awards. It is apparent that this research is not only indicated but it is imperative if illustrations are to serve their academic purpose.

Finally, since children are exposed more frequently to the category of books that include the Caldecott Winners and Honor Books, it would only be reasonable and academic that these books contain illustrations which are appealing and appropriate for the children.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This study is a replication of the study completed by John W. Stewig. The time frame for the Stewig study ranged from the time of inception of the Caldecott Award in 1938 through 1966, at five year intervals. The time frame for this study was from 1966 through 1986. Stewig's last year of evaluation served as a base for the current study. Stewig's evaluation instrument was used in this study.

Selection of the Judges

In order to preserve internal validity within the evaluation process of the study, three individuals who were knowledgeable and experienced in the area of art were selected as judges. The first judge selected has been an active college professor in an Art Department for the past eighteen years. In addition, he has

gained much experience by acting as a judge at local showings. The second judge had taught art for three years at a University located in a foreign country and for some period of time was consultant to the state government for the design and illustrations of official government posters. The third judge, a retired art instructor, had taught at the university level. In addition, she had been chief consultant for the art department in the local public school system.

It was felt that these judges were sufficiently knowledgeable and experienced to provide for an unbiased and objective evaluation of the illustrations.

Training of the Judges

The judges were trained in two phases. In the first phase, the judges met with the researcher collectively. During this phase, the definitions pertinent to the study and the evaluation categories Space, Detail, Modeling-Form, Color and Proportion were established. The Space category was defined as the arrangement by the artist of objects which are placed one behind the other, in perspective, to give the impression of space. Detail was defined as the utilization of finite technique in order to preserve

realism. Modeling-Form was defined as the rendering of the appearance of relief by using lines and shades to produce three-dimensional effects. Color was defined as the result obtained or produced by the application of paints or tints to a suitable media. Proportion was defined as the relation of one part to another part or a part to a whole, with respect to magnitude and quantity. The list of the forty-two Caldecott Winners and First Honor books for the years 1966-1986 were given to the three judges. In addition, copies of the evaluation instrument and the guidelines were distributed and reviewed. Samples of Stewig's evaluations and the illustrations that he had evaluated were demonstrated and explained at this time.

The evaluation scale is divided into five levels labeled one through five. For example:

Proportion

1 - if proportion is consistently realistic
2 - if there is some distortion, but proportion is mainly realistic
3 - if the artist consciously used distortion for at least half of the illustration, or elements in them
4 - if there is almost no realism in proportion

5 - if the artist's purpose is accomplished with no or only incidental relation to life-like proportion A one indicates that the illustrations have been rated natural and realistic and a five indicates that the illustrations have been rated as abstract. The three on the scale was established as the median.

The second phase consisted of individual meetings with the judges in order to reinforce the understanding of the definitions, terms and guidelines pertinent to this study.

Upon completion of the preparation, the judges proceeded to evaluate the illustrations of the Caldecott Winners and first Honor Books for the years 1966 through 1986. Each book was evaluated by every judge. When the evaluations were completed, a realism quotient was established by adding the evaluation ratings of all of the books that had been performed by the three judges. The sums of each evaluation were divided by the number of categories which was five (5) in order to determine their individual arithmetic mean or realism quotient. The quotients of each of the books were then added and averaged in order to determine an overall realism quotient for the winner

and Honor book for every year of the study. The quotients were then plotted in order to provide a tabular representation of the quotients.

The same procedure was followed to provide a visual comparison of the average quotients of the five categories (Space, Detail, Modeling-Form and Proportion) for the winners and honor books of each year. The time frame was divided into two parts using 1976 as the cutoff for the first half (decade) of the study. The years 1977 through 1986 were labeled the second half (decade) of the study.

RESULTS

Category Rating Distribution in Caldecott Winners

The bar graph for the first decade shows an even distribution of abstract ratings, with emphasis in the years 1968, 1971, 1973, 1975 and 1976 (see figure 1).

In the category distribution for the Caldecott Winners in the first decade, fifty-eight percent (58%) of the ratings were at or below the median which indicated realism and forty-two percent (42%) were above the median indicating abstract. Nineteen (19) of the twenty-one (21) abstract ratings occurred in 1968,

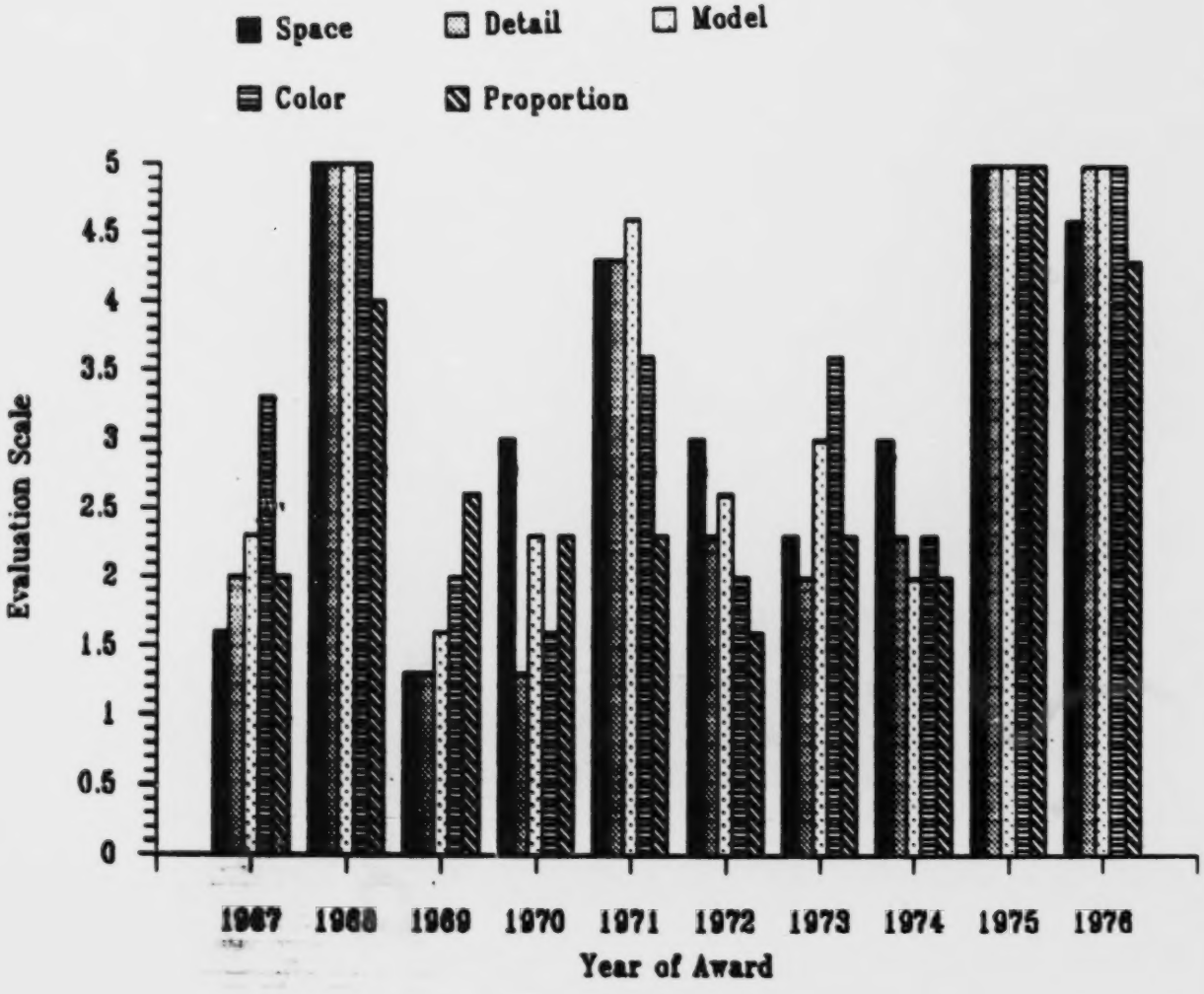


Figure 1. Category Comparison of Caldecott Winners 1967-1976

1971, 1975 and 1976. The other two abstract ratings were for the Color Category in 1967 and 1973 .

In the second decade (see figure 2) ninety-two percent (92%) of the ratings were at or below the median indicating realism and eight percent (8%) were above the median indicating abstract. Three of the four abstract ratings were in the year 1983 for the Detail, Modeling-form and Color Categories. In 1979, the Color Category rating was above the median. Figures 1 and 2 present a graphic depiction of the development of a trend toward realism in the second decade in the illustrations of the Caldecott Winners and First Honor Books.

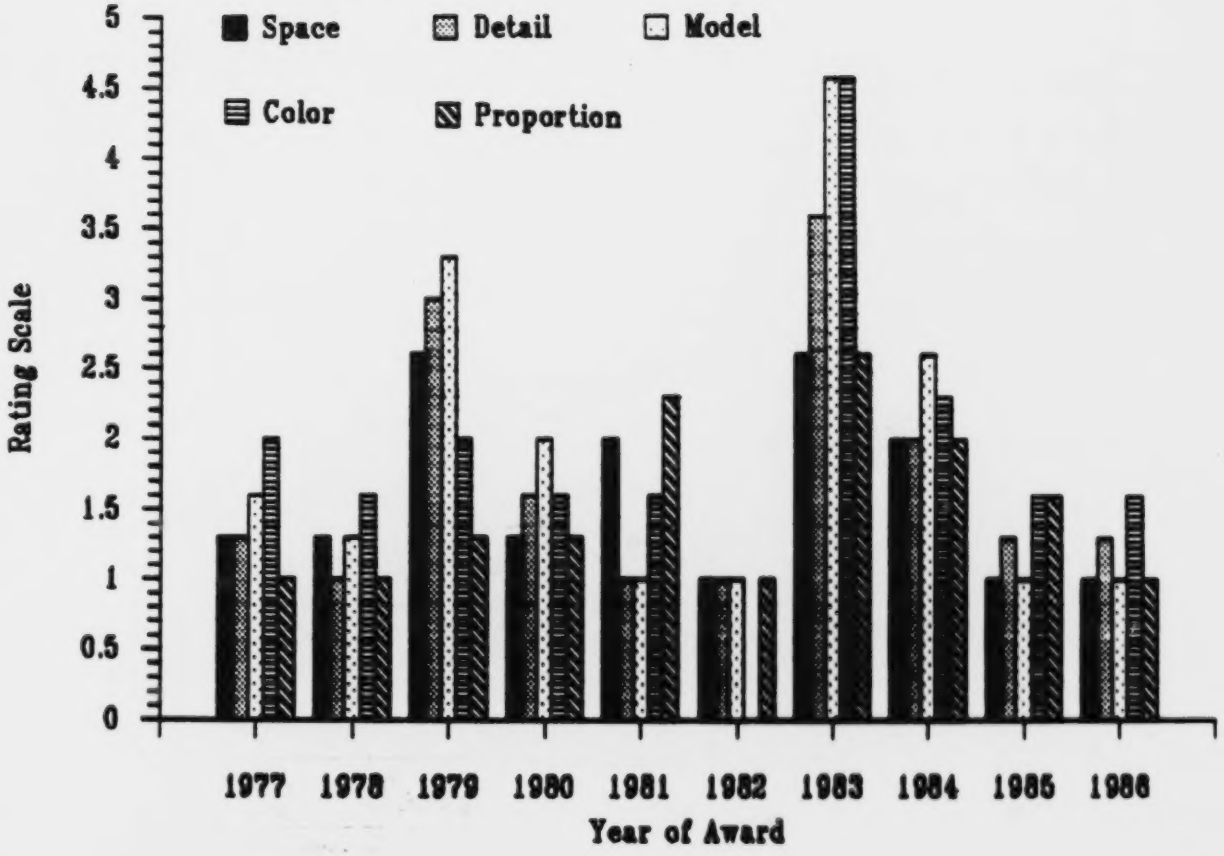


Figure 2. Category Comparison of Caldecott Winners 1977–1986

Correlation Analysis of Categories

In order to determine the inter-relationships between the five (5) specific categories (space, detail, modeling-form and proportion), a Spearman rho Correlation Coefficients was generated. An Alpha level of .05 was set as criteria for significance (see Table 1).

Analysis of the data of the five (5) specific categories (Space, Detail, Modeling-form, Color and Proportion) was analyzed (Spearman rho) to determine the extent of the relationship between the categories. Data presented in the correlation matrix indicates that positive relationships were found between all pairs at the .001 level. The higher correlation in the winners was in the Modeling-Form and Detail categories and the lowest was in the Proportiona and Color categories. In the First Honor Books, the highest was in the Modeling-Form and Detail Categories and the lowest was in the Color and Modeling-Form categories.

The overall Realism Quotient was computed for each book (see Table 2). Four of the five abstract ratings were in the first decade. There were three more realism ratings in the second decade than in the first, six and nine respectively. Indicating an abstract

Table 1

Intercorrelation of Space, Detail, Modeling-Form, Color and Proportion Categories in the Evaluation of Caldecott Winners and First Honor Books for Realism

Categories	1	2	3	4	5
1 Space	----	.8233	.8558	.6905	.7115
2 Detail	.8720	----	.9382	.8534	.6281
3 Modeling	.9134	.9263	----	.8456	.6931
4 Color	.6287	.7245	.7194	----	.7005
5 Proportion	.8559	.8845	.8991	.7943	----

Note 1: Top/Right of Matrix is Caldecott Winner Books, n = 21
Lower/Left is Caldecott First Honor Books, n = 21

Note 2: All Intercorrelations are Significant Beyond the .001 level

Table 2

Distribution of Realism Quotient Ratings Above/Below Median for Caldecott Winners and Honor Books

	Decade	
	1	2
Winner		
Above Median	4	1
Below Median	6	9
Honor Books		
Above Median	5	1
Below Median	5	9

trend in the first decade which converted to a trend in realism in the second decade.

Comparison of Realism Quotients by Decade of Caldecott Winners for the Years 1967-86

Statistical analysis of the data indicates that a significant difference existed between the two decades at the .05 level (see Table 3). The illustrations in the second decade were significantly more realistic with a mean of 1.75 than in the first decade with a mean of 3.21

Table 3

Mann-Whitney U Comparison of Realism Quotients by Decade in Caldecott Winners for the Years 1967-86

Group	N	Mean	Mean Rank	U	Z	Prob
1967-76	10	3.21	14.30			
				12.0	2.8779	0.0040
1977-86	10	1.75	6.70			

Comparison of Realism Quotients by Decade of Caldecott Honor Books for the Years 1967-86

Statiscal analysis of the data indicates that a significant difference existed between the two decade (see table 4). The illustrations in the second decade were signicantly more realistic with a mean of 1.70 than in the first decade with a mean of 3.25

Table 4

Mann-Whitney U Comparison of Realism Quotients by Decade of Caldecott Honor Books for the Years 1967-86

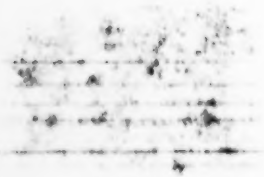
Group	N	Mean	Mean Rank	U	Z	Prob
1967-76	10	3.25	13.85			
				16.5	2.5381	0.0111
1977-86	10	1.70	7.15			

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

These results indicate a trend in the first half of the study, 1966-1976, toward the abstract in the illustrations of the books selected for the Caldecott

Award. However, during the second half of the study, 1977-1986, it was indicated that a definite trend had developed toward realism in the illustrations of the Caldecott Winners.

These results are in contrast to those of Stewig who found that there were no appreciable trends toward or away from realism in the illustrations of the Caldecott recipients from 1938-1966. Shortly after Stewig completed his study, there was a trend in the the late sixties and early seventies that developed toward the abstract. In the late seventies and on into the eighties there is an indication of a trend toward realism in the illustrations of the Caldecott Winners and First Honor Books.



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